

New CRSP MC  
manager

L2I Program  
participants

IDC face-to-face  
meeting

Substation  
safety

# CLOSED Circuit

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION

AUGUST 2022

## Collaborating for the future







# CLOSED Circuit

VOL. 44 NO. 7, August 2022

Editor: PHILIP REED

Graphic Designer: DANIELLE ORR

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**Western Area  
Power Administration**

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION  
P.O. Box 281213  
Lakewood, CO 80228-8213  
720.962.7050  
[www.wapa.gov](http://www.wapa.gov) | [publicaffairs@wapa.gov](mailto:publicaffairs@wapa.gov)

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## Contents

<b>Electrofishing keeps Green River healthy</b> <i>These surveys provide important data to better understand river health.</i>	<b>1</b>
<b>Get to know CRSP MC's new manager</b> <i>Rodney Bailey is WAPA's newest senior vice president.</i>	<b>5</b>
<b>Facing off for Inclusion and Diversity</b> <i>Inclusion and Diversity Committee holds first in-person meeting since 2020.</i>	<b>7</b>
<b>L2I Program participants selected</b> <i>The L2I Program is an enhanced version of the LEAD Program.</i>	<b>9</b>
<b>Environmental protection specialist wins Emerging Leader Award</b> <i>Andrea Severson is the latest WAPA employee recognized by her peers at RMEL.</i>	<b>10</b>
<b>Open Mic provides innovative learning events</b> <i>Open Mic promotes common understanding of WAPA and facilitates connection.</i>	<b>12</b>
<b>AEM celebrates employees, spotlights challenges</b> <i>The most recent All-Employee Meeting featured a slightly different format.</i>	<b>13</b>
<b>Employee resource groups are coming to WAPA</b> <i>ERGs increase interaction and serve as a communication channel.</i>	<b>14</b>
<b>Stay safe at substations</b> <i>Be aware and stay safe when you visit substations.</i>	<b>15</b>
<b>Rapid Recaps</b> • Employees discuss FEVS results with leadership • DSW receives replacement helicopter	<b>17</b>
<b>Brief Transmissions</b> • WAPA announces DSW regional manager • COVID-19 quarantine guidance available • Combined Financial Statements now available • Award deadlines on the horizon	<b>18</b>

## On the cover

In April WAPA employees participated in the biannual trout electrofishing survey of Green River below Flaming Gorge Dam in Utah. Read more on page 1.







# Electrofishing keeps Green River healthy

**O**n April 25-26, Colorado River Storage Project Management Center staff assisted in the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources' biannual trout electrofishing survey of Green River below Flaming Gorge Dam. Fish Biologist **Derek Fryer**, who joined WAPA in 2019, led the initiative on CRSP MC's end.

*continued on Page 2*

Jordan Detlor from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources handles a large nonnative northern pike caught during the trout electrofishing survey below Flaming Gorge Dam in Utah, April 26-27.





Natural Resource Specialist **Mark Suchy** holds one of the largest fish caught during the spring 2022 electrofishing trip.



Utah State Conservation Officer **Bryan Clyde** holds one of the largest fish caught during April's trout electrofishing survey.

"I coordinated the volunteers within WAPA and worked with the State of Utah to make sure they had enough people to conduct the survey," Fryer said. "CRSP MC stays involved with this research to keep these connections going, because it's important to maintain our relationships with Utah, the guides, river users and those who find their livelihoods floating and fly fishing that section of the river."

Also assisting were Natural Resource Specialist **Mark Suchy** and General Biologist **Tim Langer**. This was Suchy's first electrofishing foray with WAPA, but he has significant experience in marine environmentalism and fisheries, and he was already familiar with the process.

Representatives from other organizations participated as well, including the Bureau of Reclamation, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, Trout Unlimited and Utah State University.

"It's a diverse group," said Flaming Gorge Project Leader Ryan Mosley, from the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources. "It's a huge amount of effort, planning and lining up people to pull it off, having equipment ready and working to make sure that everything goes off without a hitch."

"It is a big job," agreed Langer. "You catch and process fish from around 7:30 p.m. to midnight. When you're catching 400 fish in a night, it takes a bunch of people to process them all."

The work, however, is worth it. Surveys such as these provide important population estimates, as well as growth and condition data to better understand how daily operations may affect the trout fishery below Flaming Gorge Dam.

Monitoring the fishery occurs each year in the spring and autumn, with the next outing planned for September. The information collected from each event is beneficial to understanding and responding to the health and aquatic life of Green River. As of 2022, the data covers around 30 years of sampling.

"There have obviously been some gaps here and there, just because of high flows or there not being enough water to allow us to sample but, for the most part, it's a very complete data set," said Mosley.

"Our studies on the Green River below Flaming Gorge Dam help us better understand the biological effects of winter double peaking on trout and aquatic insect populations,"

Fryer explained. "We found that the stomach fullness in trout is much higher immediately following a peak flow discharge than it was after steady flow. The research showed that double peaking was not harming trout. Rather, it helps them maintain weight throughout the winter by scouring the plants below the dam, which releases aquatic insects into the water column for the trout to feed on."

For each electrofishing event, the team adheres to the same methodology. They set up two sampling locations on Green River, with one immediately below the dam at Tailrace and the other about seven miles downriver at Little Hole.

"We have three one-mile study reaches at each location and we electrofish each side of the river," said Mosely, referring to the process of shocking the fish in order to collect and catalogue them.

"Electrofishing is a tool that we use to capture and enumerate fisheries populations," explained Fryer. "It is designed in a way that it doesn't harm the fish, but it stuns them enough that they are brought up to the surface where you can net them."

Langer explained that the equipment in the boat is powered by a



battery, with shocks delivered via anodes at the end of 12-foot-long poles at the front of the vehicle.

"The anode hangs down from those poles into the water," he said. "When the operator turns on the battery, the anodes put an electric current into the water. The electric current passes over the fish and they are temporarily stunned. We have two netters at the front of the boat, and they place them into a live well. Then they go back to the front and net some more."

"Everybody from WAPA was hands on with the whole project," added Suchy.

The team transfers the trout they catch to live wells inside the boat, and then move them to holding pens on the shore. The fish are anaesthetized, weighed, measured for length and scanned for tags, marks and clips. A black light is used to identify stocked trout, which are marked with ultraviolet dye, allowing biologists to better understand how the stocked fish are surviving and growing.

Biologists measure the relationship between a fish's weight and length. They compare that to other published trout condition indices, allowing them to assess the condition of local fish as one season ends and another begins.

As they process the night's catches, the researchers take note of many things. Fryer drew attention to, among other things, the work of the "bug lab," a collaborative effort between CRSP MC, Utah State University and the Bureau of Land Management.

"We work with bug lab researchers who conduct a gastric lavage of the stomach contents on a subsample of survey fish to determine what they were eating recently," he said. "The State of Utah also has some hatchery personnel on hand who perform a necropsy on a small sample of last year's stocked rainbow trout. They look at the overall condition of the fish, internally and externally, to determine how hatchery-stocked fish are holding up."

He explained that the trout population and the food that the trout rely on are "two big pieces of the puzzle."

"We are using science to help us understand how our operations may affect those populations and what we can do to mitigate those impacts," he explained.

"At the end of the night, we tip those recovery tanks into the river and release all of the fish," Mosley said.

"The fact that the fish are returned unharmed to the river at the end of the night is one of the main benefits of electrofishing," Fryer said. "It's an effective tool for assessing fisheries' populations without harming the fish."

The purpose of expeditions such as this one is to monitor the continuing health of the river and ensure that hydropower and other activities are not interfering with aquatic lifecycles.

"If we do identify any impacts," Mosley said, "those could be the result of flows. They could also be a result of our management. For instance, if we are not seeing good performance of rainbow trout, or if we are seeing

something that alarms us with their population, we can actually adjust our stocking rates or even change the strains of rainbow trout that we stock and start seeing better returns. Everything we see while electrofishing should complement what anglers see. We are managing it better for river users."

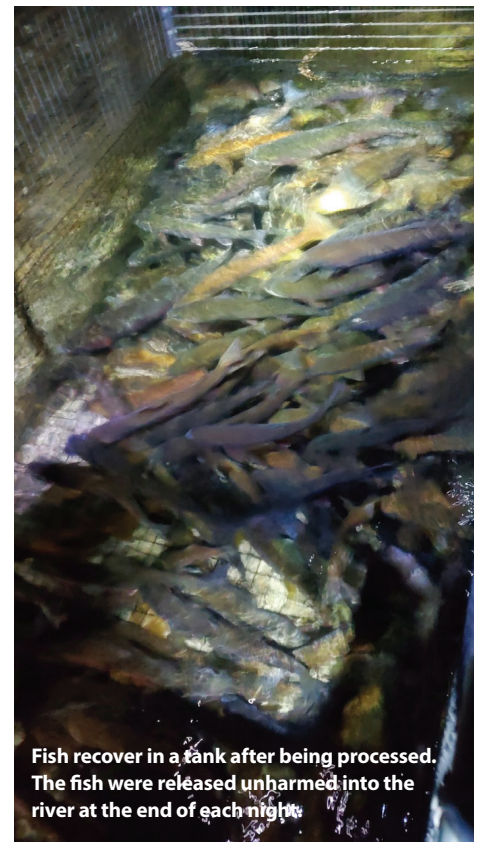
"Monitoring the river this way ensures that we are having a non-negative impact on the fisheries there," Suchy added. "That is the main thought process behind this project. I think that it's important for us to do that and show our involvement to the public in that manner."

Electrofishing is an interesting and novel enough method of sampling that it attracts a great deal of interest, both from volunteers and from observers.

"A lot of anglers stop by and watch what we're doing," said Mosley. "It's kind of funny to me that some of those anglers could have had poor success on the river that day, and then they stop in and see how many fish we've caught in the expedition. They are impressed by the amount of effort that we employ to monitor this fishery."



Once brought to shore, trout were weighed, measured for length and scanned for tags, marks and clips. This process does not harm the trout.



Fish recover in a tank after being processed. The fish were released unharmed into the river at the end of each night.





General Biologist *Tim Langer* holds one of the largest fish caught during the trout electrofishing survey in April 2022.



Volunteers from multiple organizations prepare to begin the electrofishing survey April 27. The survey began each night around 7:30 p.m. and concluded at midnight.

Mosley also had great things to say about his experience partnering with WAPA.

"I've always had a great relationship with WAPA employees who assist us with these projects," he said. "It helps things run so much more smoothly. I really appreciate WAPA's assistance because they have the experience to help out and they know the value of this. Also, they're helping anglers have lots of opportunity to catch sizable fish on the Green River, and many of them."

Fryer mentioned that they caught a good number of impressive fish during the survey.

"We shocked up some big fish, some really big German brown trout," he said. "Those are everybody's highlights of the whole trip, seeing those fish who survived a lot of years and became really big. They hit seven, eight or nine pounds sometimes, and it's really impressive."

Those weren't just fish stories, either; on the first night, the biggest brown trout they caught was 7.9 pounds. On the second night, it was nine pounds.

"These are the two biggest brown trout in the eight years that I've been electrofishing," Langer said. "They were beautiful fish, too."

Mosley mentioned that seeing such long-lived fish is reassuring, and it

proves that WAPA is able to balance the needs of customers and the river.

"It just highlights what WAPA is doing and the way we operate the dam and pattern the flows for hydropower," he said. "It can be done in conjunction with maintaining these popular fisheries. From my perspective, that's kind of the takeaway of what we do out there and why."

"From the double-peaking study we conducted, we saw some effects of what we call density dependence," Fryer said.

Density dependence means, in short, that the overall population of trout is limited by factors such as food resources. In previous years, the number of trout may have been high, while the size and condition of the fish could have been less than optimal.

"Now, we see a wide range of trout size classes, good body conditions coming out of winter and some of those big nine-pound browns in the recent surveys," he said. "This says a lot of good things about how the river and the fishery are being managed. It indicates that the population size is good, allowing some of the fish to get really big, while still having relatively high trout abundance. These surveys show us that we can have a great trout fishery and operate the dam in manner beneficial to hydropower. This is a true win-win scenario for CRSP MC."

The information gathered from past electrofishing events has allowed CRSP MC to study its release patterns and ensure that it continues to provide reliable power to customers without disturbing the health of the river or its aquatic life.

"We developed a trout individual base model with Argonne National Laboratory, and through these experiments and monitoring with the model, we have been able to show that we are not harming the trout population, but are actually benefitting it," Fryer said. "These trout models help us understand what's going on and then explain it to the community of resource users. That allows us to save literally millions of dollars. In the long term, sampling events such as these save everyone lots of money, and CRSP MC is proud to be able to lead the effort."

Fryer also made particular note of the fact that he is happy to work with interested colleagues on sampling events like this one.

"Contact me if you are interested," he said. "We are always looking for people, and it's a chance to see what CRSP MC does and some of the things our biologists work on. You get to get your hands on fish and see what electrofishing is really all about. It's a good time with a great group of people, and we'd love to see more folks get involved." □



# Get to know CRSP MC's new manager



n May 22, **Rodney Bailey** became senior vice president and manager of the Colorado River Storage Project

Management Center. He had been acting in the position since January.

“Rodney’s extensive knowledge of WAPA-wide and CRSP operations, long-standing partnerships with customers and experience leading WAPA’s market efforts will be instrumental to support CRSP customers on the front lines of drought in the West,” said Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** in her announcement. “His leadership is appreciated particularly now as he champions an outstanding team that is passionate about maintaining the value of hydropower in the Colorado River Basin and seeking innovative solutions through collaboration.”

CRSP MC markets power from 15 hydroelectric powerplants, including Glen Canyon Dam, and delivers it across more than 2,300 miles of transmission lines and 35 high-voltage transformers. Bailey will lead all power marketing and operations activities for CRSP MC in Montrose, Colorado. CRSP MC serves around 150 retail energy customers and other utilities in Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Utah and Wyoming.

Bailey earned a bachelor’s degree in technology management from Utah Valley University. He joined CRSP MC in 1999 as a public utilities specialist. He became the CRSP MC rates manager in 2009 and was named CRSP MC vice president of Power Marketing in 2011. More recently, he served as WAPA’s power marketing advisor since 2016.

*Closed Circuit* sat down with Bailey recently to learn more about him.



## What brought you to WAPA initially?

I grew up in a small town located in the northeast corner of Utah. After graduating college, I accepted an intern position as a civilian employee with the Department of the Army, duty stationed at the Red River Army Depot in Texarkana, Texas.

I attended the School of Engineering and Logistics for nearly one year. I was then transferred to the Rock Island Arsenal in Rock Island, Illinois. A year later I was transferred to the Soldier Systems Command in Natick, Massachusetts. As a civilian employee, to understand



how to better support the troops, I attended and graduated from officer basic training.

I thoroughly enjoyed my experiences with the Department of the Army but, after four years, I came to the realization that I loved the West and wanted to be closer to the mountains and my family in Utah. I applied for and was selected for a position in the CRSP Rates department in Salt Lake City. I have been fortunate in my career to have many opportunities and still remain in the state that I call home.

### **What has been your most rewarding experience at WAPA so far?**

I have enjoyed every opportunity I have received, and am looking forward to the new opportunity and challenge of leading CRSP MC. This has always been my preferred career progression, though I never thought it would become a reality. I am thankful today for the chance to once again be part of the CRSP team.

I have also taken many opportunities to participate in leadership development programs and accepted detail opportunities to learn more about other areas of the organization and improve my skills and understanding. I learned early that no one cares more about my career than I do, a motto that has served me well as I have sought opportunities and stretched beyond my comfort zone.

Most of all, I appreciate the opportunity to work with a host of amazing people. They say that if you want to be successful, surround yourself with successful people. I consider this to be one of the most rewarding parts of my career at WAPA.

### **How have your previous roles at WAPA prepared you for your new role?**

I spent my first 17 years in the CRSP organization with many roles in Power Marketing. For the past six years, I have had the opportunity to work with many people all across WAPA as the power marketing advisor.

I believe that participating with all regions on a variety of issues and being part of the Senior Leadership Team have given me a valuable perspective

“Most of all, I appreciate the opportunity to work with a host of amazing people.”

and understanding of the organization. That has prepared me for my new role as the CRSP manager.

### **What is something most people do not know about you?**

I enjoy cooking in my cast-iron Dutch ovens. I have eight of them in various sizes. I'm not a medal-wearing champion, but I enjoy the process and usually the results.

I have also recently tried my hand at bread making and make a pretty mean loaf of bread, if I do say so myself!

### **What are you reading right now? Do you have a favorite author?**

I have always been very active and enjoy working with my hands. As such, I have never been an avid reader. I enjoy short articles, mostly religious or related to outdoor activities.

### **What are your communication and leadership styles?**

My communications style is “no surprises!” I don't need to be involved in every minute detail, but I do like to know what is going on and understand issues.

I think communication is key to success. If we are not informed, we fill in the blanks mentally and, even if those thoughts are incorrect, they become reality in our mind.

My leadership style is simple: Everyone will rise to the level of our expectation. I believe communicating that level and allowing autonomy to complete the work brings satisfaction and success. I believe teamwork is usually the best approach and also

creates success. In that regard, if one is successful, we are all successful.

I have been given opportunities to grow and I want to allow those same opportunities to others.

### **Would you tell us about your coworkers at home?**

My wife and I have been married for 32 years. We are semi-empty nesters. We have three adult children, two girls and a boy, who are on their own, but our youngest son recently moved home after being away at a junior college. He will continue his education at a university that is closer to home this fall.

My wife is “retired” after 18 years in the community development department of the city in which we live. I say “retired” because she works harder now taking care of me than she did at work. We also have one of the best blessings in life: a granddaughter who keeps us hopping!

### **During WAPA's period of maximum telework, what do you think was the most valuable lesson you've learned as a leader?**

Being prepared and being flexible is key to being successful. The foresight of our Information Technology leadership that had prepared WAPA's systems and equipment to quickly pivot to a remote work environment was key to our success.

I am an introvert by nature, but I did learn that we all need face-to-face interaction to build and maintain relationships. I am grateful we are able to return to some sense of our past in meeting together. □





As part of Asian American, Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander Heritage Month, the IDC welcomed Refugee Congress Honorary Delegate Nga Vương-Sandoval as its guest speaker.

# Facing off for Inclusion and Diversity

By Eric Barendsen

**I**n late May, WAPA's Inclusion and Diversity Committee gathered for its first in-person meeting since the pandemic began.

The morning proceedings included an introduction to WAPA's inclusion and diversity framework by Equal Employment Manager **Charles Montañez** and Diversity & Inclusion Manager **Peggy Wooten**.

"I look at diversity and inclusion as a stew," Wooten said during her introduction. "The diversity is all the different ingredients that you put in the pot to make the stew, so it has many flavors and textures."

A good stew requires heat and, in this analogy, that refers to things such as diversity and inclusion training, the Inclusion and Diversity Committee and regular communications from

the Office of Economic Impact and Diversity.

"Inclusion is what happens when the stew is complete with some melding of flavors, but the ingredients also retain their unique characteristics," she said.

The committee discussed how cultural assimilation – the integration of people, ideas or culture into a wider society or culture – can work at cross purposes with inclusion and diversity efforts, which strive to celebrate differences. At the same time, committee members acknowledged that some degree of assimilation is often required to be accepted. It's a reality that many people face at WAPA and beyond.

"Being a Hispanic female electrical engineer working in an all-male environment, you have to assimilate," Engineering and Construction Manager **Teresita Amaro** said. "You have to follow the norms, and a lot of times you lose your identity."

"I think there are a lot of people that would resonate with, where we feel like we've given something up or feel we need to fit in somehow," Montañez said.

"I sit here today a product of assimilation, because my parents were first generation immigrants," Civil Engineer **Dan Mar** said. His parents were too busy working seven days a week, making ends meet that they didn't really have time to teach him many of their traditions, he said. "I've lost a lot of my native culture. I was never taught the language ... I'm assimilated, so to speak."

Continuous Process Improvement Program Manager **Laura Dawson** and Public Utilities Specialist **Matt Dye** – the committee's co-chairs – opened the meeting up to additional attendees in Lakewood for the event's guest speaker. The committee hosted Refugee Congress Honorary Delegate Nga Vương-Sandoval and heard her presentation on the global refugee crisis. Her personal story of leaving her home country of Việt Nam as a toddler – told primarily through emotionally moving photographs – resonated deeply with attendees.

During her talk, she explained how the Americanized spelling of her country as "Vietnam" is a vestige of being occupied during the war in the 1960s





Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist **John Russell** addresses the Inclusion and Diversity Committee during the May meeting.



High Voltage Electrician **Kerry Kilen** from Upper Great Plains takes part in the IDC face-to-face meeting in May.



Refugee Congress Honorary Delegate **Nga Vương-Sandoval** delivers her impactful talk on the plight of refugees.

and 70s. She also expressed gratitude for the committee's work.

"It's encouraging to know that federal government employees and their agency are being intentional about inclusive and equitable practices in their workspace," Nga said after the presentation.

After lunch, the committee watched Energy Secretary Jennifer Granholm's video message in response to the recent racially motivated mass shootings in America. Granholm shared a powerful message that echoed discussions the committee has had over the years: Not being a racist yourself is not enough; to truly oppose racist terrorism and hate crimes, people must practice anti-racism.

"We at the Department of Energy stand against all forms of bigotry, violence and discrimination," Granholm said in the message. "There is no place for any of that in our department. We each have a role in shaping our culture here."

In the afternoon, Montañez and Wooten led a conversation about how WAPA might want to create employee resource groups, or ERGs, envisioned as WAPA-wide groups that bring individuals together to explore a common interest or a particular culture or subject area.

The idea has already caught on at the DOE level. Examples include the Asian American Pacific Islander Network, Blacks in Government, the Disability Employment Task Force and the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Employees & Allies.

Made up of employees rather than managers, ERGs can help organizations improve retention and make

themselves more attractive to job seekers.

On the second day, the committee participated in a training about how to be an effective ally to members of underrepresented groups. The interactive exercises focused on how to function as an ally, finding opportunities to demonstrate allyship at WAPA and how to overcome an allyship misstep.

"I don't know about you, but if you are in the federal government long enough, you're going to trip. There's going to be a misstep," Jeff Vargas, founder of Generationology, a talent management and leadership development consulting firm, explained.

Vargas has worked with the National Hockey League, which invited him to come and work with hockey players on allyship. He didn't even know how the game of hockey was played, he said, laughing.

"The reason why I'm mentioning it is because it doesn't really matter where you come from, allyship – working as an ally as a role – is something you can pick up and apply in any environment."

In closing out the two days of activities, Dawson and Dye facilitated a discussion covering key takeaways and next steps for the IDC.

Some of the things the committee learned can overlap, Dye said.

"I look at being an ally, but I can also be an ally while helping refugees," he said. "That's something that can be married together. Maybe we can connect the dots in many more ways."

At the IDC's July 25 meeting, Chief Administrative Officer **Jennifer Rodgers** announced that as WAPA continues to grow in its inclusion and diversity efforts, the IDC will be

transitioning to another form to ensure the organization effectively responds to this growth.

"The IDC was instrumental in building momentum and laying the groundwork for a more diverse and inclusive culture at WAPA," Rodgers explained to *Closed Circuit*. "And by securing a full-time employee to advance WAPA's D&I program—among many other achievements—those who contributed should all feel proud to be part of this important movement at WAPA."

"Getting to a place where WAPA has full-time staff focused on diversity and inclusion is a major accomplishment for our agency," Dawson wrote in an email to members of the committee. "Our IDC efforts were critical in how far we've come, and now it's time to hand the reins to Peggy Wooten, our diversity and inclusion manager."

"Grassroots engagement from WAPA employees remains critical to the continued success of WAPA's D&I effort," Rodgers said. "We need your passion, experiences and stories! I encourage those interested in continuing to support these organizationwide initiatives to join a regional Inclusion and Diversity Advisory Committee, including one that will be created at Headquarters, get involved in two new employee resource groups—or ERGs—starting soon as pilots at WAPA and take part in DOE's wide variety of existing ERGs." □

*Note: Barendsen is a public affairs specialist.*

Learn more about DOE's employee resource groups at [www.energy.gov/diversity/employee-resource-groups](http://www.energy.gov/diversity/employee-resource-groups)





# L2I Program participants selected

**I**n June, Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** announced the first participants of WAPA's Leadership Learning Intensive, or L2I, Program. The L2I Program is an enhanced version of the organization's previous Leadership Emergence and Development Program, including mentoring, coaching and numerous assessments to facilitate growth and continue developing WAPA's pipeline of leaders.

## In their own words

The first L2I participants share their hopes for the program.

### Chief of Staff **Melissa Ardis**

I am very excited to be part of the new L2I Program. I am looking forward to getting to know others in this cohort as well as getting to work across WAPA in a different capacity. I truly believe this program will help hone my leadership skills and give me the tools I need to better serve and lead at WAPA.

### Reliability Compliance Management Specialist **Kimberly Bentley**

I'm excited to be a member of WAPA's first L2I cohort and participate in the events and training available. I'm especially looking forward to detailing into other functional areas and working with employees I would otherwise not have met. I hope to enhance my leadership abilities and develop skills and knowledge, which will make me a more effective WAPA employee and leader.

### Public Utilities Specialist **Nicole Gonsalves**

I'm excited for the opportunities of the L2I Program and to challenge myself to enhance results-driven skills through positive work cultures and inspiring and motivating others. This, in turn strengthens WAPA as a whole. I have witnessed LEAD graduates transition from great workers to strong leaders and aim to do the same.

### Records and Information Management Manager **Chris Magee**

I'm looking forward to everything about the L2I Program! Learning formal leadership skills, developing new relationships, performing work assignments outside of my comfort zone and better understanding how WAPA operates will not only make me a better

leader but a better public servant. I can't wait to begin putting these new skills to use.

### Supervisory Environmental Protection Specialist **LaTisha Saare**

I am excited to learn more about other functions, departments and regions within WAPA through the L2I Program. I am looking forward to stretch assignments that will push me out of my comfort zone and improve my leadership skills so that I may better serve the agency in the future.

### Power System Dispatcher **Justin Spear**

I consider myself a lifelong learner and the L2I Program provides a phenomenal opportunity to broaden skillsets, network with other WAPA professionals and provide value to the entire WAPA team for years to come. I truly believe that, as a WAPA employee, I have a duty to the American taxpayers to become the most dynamic and well-rounded leader I can be. I am honored and humbled to be selected to join the L2I Program.

### Safety and Occupational Health Manager **Krystall Valencia**

I am excited to be a part of the L2I development program. I am looking forward to the learning activities, senior leadership discussions and peer networking. These are all opportunities to support WAPA's mission, strengthen my current leadership skills and provide me with tools I will use in the future. As an emerging leader, I am proud to be a part of an organization that invests in its employees.

L2I is designed for high-performing employees at the GS-13 to GS-14 level. The program focuses on four main competencies: relationship management, developing others, conflict management and communication.

These competencies were chosen based on data gathered by the Leadership Development Program over the course of two years. The L2I program consists of a rigorous entry process, including two levels of supervisor recommendations, five Executive Core Qualifications written responses and an interview. The ECQ written responses and the interview process were facilitated by a group of GS-15s and Senior Executive Service employees.

Seven employees were selected to be part of the 2022-2023 cohort. They will receive training during the program, travel to each region to perform details outside of their main jobs. The program began in June and will run through November 2023. □



# Environmental protection specialist wins Emerging Leader Award



**I**n May, Environmental Protection Specialist **Andrea Severson** received the Emerging Leader Award from RMEL in Denver, Colorado.

“The Emerging Leader Award recognizes and honors RMEL members who are high potentials in their company and have five to 10 years of experience in the industry, establishing significant contributions within their organization and have demonstrated the potential for leadership and continuing service in the electric utility industry,” said RMEL in its press release. “In the seven years Andrea has been with WAPA, she has established an excellent reputation within the organization as a leader in environmental compliance innovation and has made significant contributions to WAPA by streamlining, while also improving, environmental compliance and positively affecting major WAPA business decisions.”

RMEL is a not-for-profit energy trade association that has served the electric utility industry with a variety of education and networking services since 1903. Previously known as the Rocky Mountain Electrical League, the association officially became RMEL in the 1990s to better reflect a membership base that spans the entire country.



Environmental Protection Specialist **Andrea Severson** receives “**PUSH: Breaking through the Barriers**” from the author, U.S. Olympian **Johnny Quinn**.



"Andrea is a critical part of the Rocky Mountain Environment team and routinely identifies solutions for problems that affect every department in RM," said Environmental Manager **Jim Wood**, who nominated her for the award. "Andrea is also a great teammate and regularly volunteers to help others inside our group as well as staff in other departments."

His praise did not end there.

"Andrea routinely goes above and beyond in her current role and, as a result, has received some of the highest performance ratings of RM employees in the past seven years," he said.

*Closed Circuit* sat down with Severson to discuss the award.

### **Tell us a little bit about your background.**

I'm originally from Vernal, Utah, and I'm a second-generation federal employee. Both of my parents worked for resource management agencies and I knew from an early age that I wanted to follow a similar path.

After earning my degrees from Utah State University and Kansas State University, I started my permanent federal career as a natural resource specialist at the Bureau of Reclamation in McCook, Nebraska. Because the office I was in was very lightly staffed, I ended up wearing a lot of different hats and had exposure to a wide array of resource management, environment and emergency response topics.

It was fun to be exposed to so many things, because this helped me recognize my strengths and my interests. I was also able to grow a diverse professional network and learn about WAPA from some of my Reclamation colleagues in Denver, which ultimately gave me the motivation to apply to WAPA.

### **Can you explain your role at WAPA?**

I'm a natural resource specialist and I've been in this position since 2015. My primary roles and responsibilities are completing National Environmental Policy Act reviews, Endangered Species Act consultations and overseeing RM's Avian Protection Program.

I am part of the Environment team that ensures all of our maintenance and construction projects comply with federal environmental laws. I work with Environment, Lands, Maintenance and Construction colleagues in RM, Headquarters and other regions. We develop solutions to issues that may arise, such as reliability concerns from nesting and roosting birds, the need for project modifications to protect threatened and endangered species and helping educate federal land and resource management agencies about WAPA's mission.

### **Of what accomplishment are you most proud?**

I've been part of some high-profile accomplishments at WAPA, and those are definitely exciting, but the accomplishment that I'm most happy with is helping to build a stronger working relationship at RM between Environment and Maintenance.

It's great when colleagues in Maintenance or Construction contact me with questions or issues they're looking for my assistance with. I've helped Maintenance address wildlife damage issues, brainstormed ways to minimize environmental disturbance from projects, negotiated with other federal and state agencies to reduce timing restrictions on projects and done numerous other small things along the way that have helped to build trust, respect and confidence. These are the accomplishments that keep paying dividends over time.

### **How does it feel to be recognized this way by RMEL?**

I'm so honored that my manager, RM's regional manager and RMEL all saw fit to recognize someone in the environment field as an emerging leader. It feels great to bring awareness to some of the work that is done behind the scenes to help bring projects to fruition.

### **What has been your experience with RMEL?**

The Management, Engineering and Operations Conference that I was

invited to attend to receive my award was my first interaction with RMEL. I really enjoyed the different perspectives that came together at the conference and the warm and welcoming atmosphere.

I would highly recommend future RMEL offerings to others at WAPA who haven't previously considered this resource. It's a great opportunity to be a student of the industry, no matter what role you fill at WAPA.

### **What is your definition of a good leader?**

My definition of a good leader has evolved over time, but currently I would define a good leader as someone who recognizes that everyone has something valuable to contribute, and is able to help others bring those contributions together to benefit a common goal.

As I have been exposed to more leaders and leadership styles, there are many attributes good leaders may have, but that is one key commonality.

### **What is one piece of advice you have for WAPA employees wishing to grow and develop as leaders?**

Recognize that there's always more to learn. Leaders never stop growing and developing.

If you pay attention, there are opportunities every day to listen, ask questions, reflect, challenge yourself and help others do the same in a respectful, constructive way.

### **Are there any other thoughts you would like to share with readers?**

I'm a big believer in Brené Brown's message of staying "awkward, brave and kind." We can learn and accomplish so much by staying present for the awkward moments, being brave enough to ask questions and being kind to those around us.

WAPA has given me many opportunities to do all of those things, and I know that I'm surrounded by people who are willing to do the same and keep moving WAPA forward in a positive direction. □



# Open Mic provides innovative learning events



By Teresa Waugh

**T**he Open Mic events are still new, and momentum continues to build since their inaugural session in December 2021. The platform informs and educates employees across WAPA who are seeking to learn more about what WAPA does as an organization, how it is done and what challenges and opportunities are faced in fulfilling our mission.

Open Mic promotes a common understanding of WAPA, which is both complex and vast, and allows employees to get to know each other.

Each month, a subject matter expert shares information and insights in their area of expertise virtually, using Microsoft Teams. Open Mic was the first WAPA-wide event to be held using this tool. As anticipated, the first few sessions were less than technically perfect, but that didn't slow anything down. An average of 261 employees have attended each session.

"We have a great turnout each time," said Auditor **Lisa O'Brien**, an original Integrated Communications Group member and Open Mic producer. "The audience is engaged and asks great questions. People really

enjoy learning more about what, why and how things work at WAPA."

It is vital to keep pushing the needle, to try new things and to learn by doing. As WAPA's core value states: "Be curious, learn more, do better. Repeat." Open Mic events offer a safe place to do that, test messaging, develop speaking skills and test presentations, which can then be polished for the next audience.

One of the greatest benefits of this effort is that it builds a portfolio of material that captures expertise and organizational knowledge. The program is inclusive, thereby reducing costs and saving time. Attendees learn more about WAPA, allowing them to identify a potential area of interest before seeking details or competing for a leadership development opportunity.

This is an efficient way to iteratively prepare the WAPA workforce for the future.

"We have dozens of ideas for potential topics and speakers for 2023," said Power Marketing Advisor **Bob Langenberger**, another original ICG member and Open Mic producer. "As long as we have presenters willing to share a little bit about what they do, Open Mic will continue well into the future."

Open Mic recordings are available for anyone to view any time. Knowledge Management is helping to create condensed versions of each event.

The platform was created by the ICG, whose mission is to identify and close communication gaps and traps and tackle emerging communication challenges. Born out of WAPA's first internal communication survey and focus groups in 2019, the ICG continues to mature and focus on opportunities.

"Working on Open Mic and with the ICG has been a very rewarding experience," said Langenberger.

"I'm excited for new projects starting soon, but Open Mic will always be my favorite," O'Brien added. □

*Note: Waugh is WAPA's chief public affairs officer.*

## Previous Open Mic events include:

- What Does a Dispatcher Do?
- Power Marketing 101 – Marketing Plans
- Linework at WAPA
- History of Pick-Sloan Missouri Basin Program
- WAPA Financial Overview
- WAPA GIS Overview and Demo
- How CRSP is Your Water?

Employees interested in presenting at an Open Mic event are encouraged to contact [openmic@wapa.gov](mailto:openmic@wapa.gov) with a description of the topic and their month of availability.

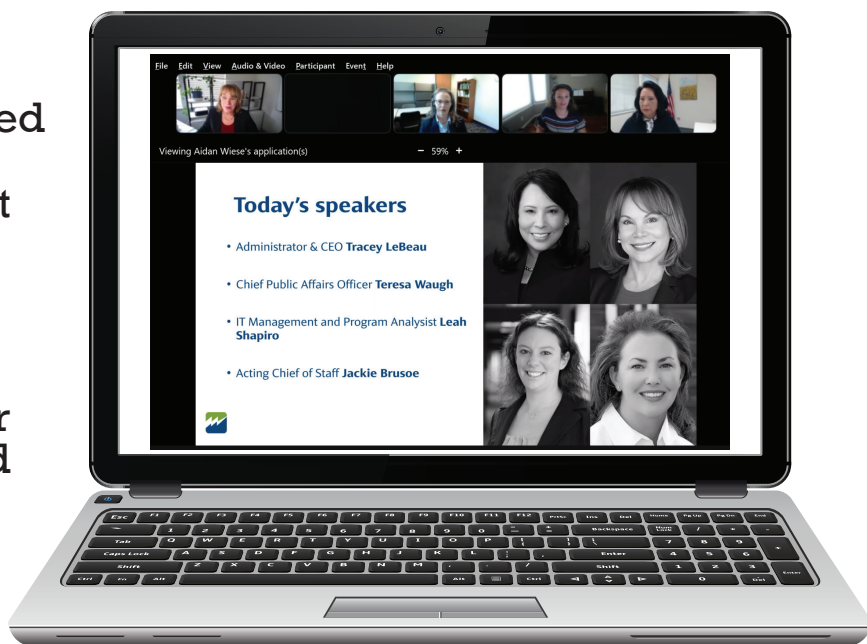




# AEM celebrates employees, spotlights challenges

The June 16 All-Employee Meeting featured a slightly different format in response to employee feedback.

This event featured fewer speakers than usual, but longer presentations and an expanded employee Q&A segment.



The AEM was emceed by Chief Public Affairs Officer **Teresa Waugh**, who spoke about WAPA's upcoming 45th anniversary in December. She also encouraged employees to submit their photos to the anniversary photo contest.

To submit your photos, visit [myWAPA, More News, Now picture this!](#) Enter the 45th Anniversary Photo Contest



Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** provided a State of WAPA update, covering many topics, includ-

ing the ongoing drought conditions in the West, emerging energy market initiatives and updates on WAPA's upcoming strategic plan.

In addition, she also spoke about the results of the Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey and reminded employees that WAPA is still in the midst of its six-month telework pilot and no final decisions have been made about the future of work.

LeBeau also announced the winners of this year's Exceptional Service Awards and congratulated them on their accomplishment.

Management and Program Analyst **Leah Shapiro** then spoke about

Information Technology initiatives and Acting Chief of Staff **Jackie Brusoe** facilitated an extended Q&A.

"Thank you for everything you do to serve our customers, meet our mission and overall make WAPA an outstanding place to work," LeBeau said at the close of her remarks. "You continue to impress me at every turn with your diligence and resilience." □

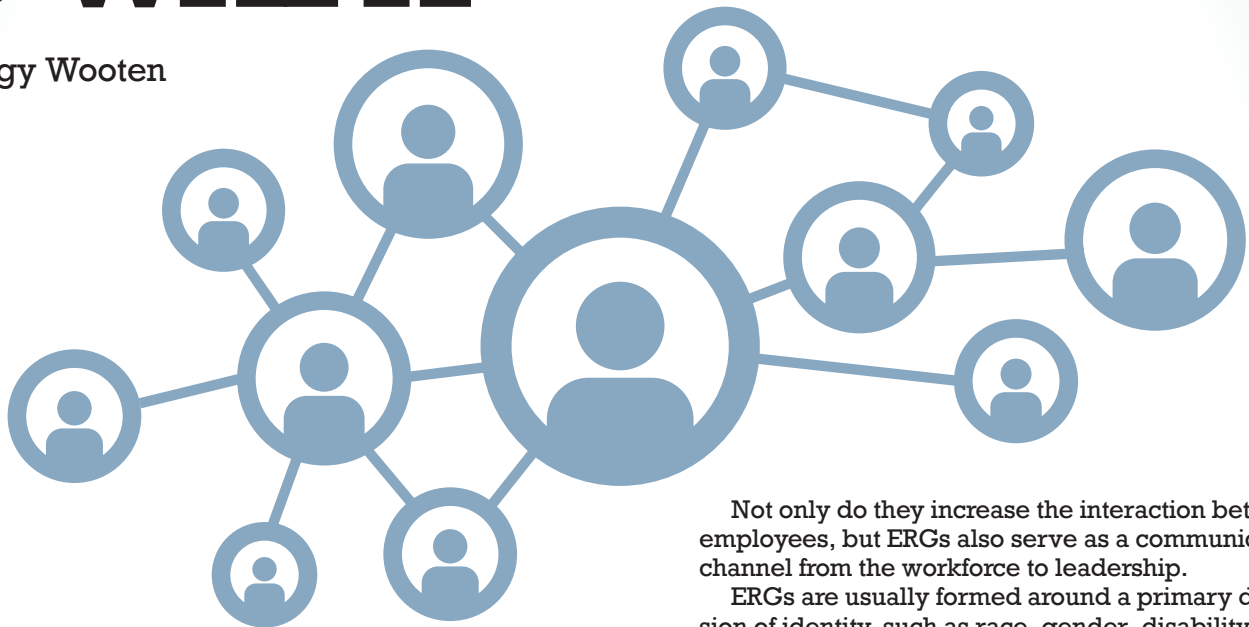
View the full recording and presentations at [myWAPA, More News, June 16 AEM materials](#) available





# Employee resource groups are coming to WAPA

By Peggy Wooten



**E**mployee resource groups, or ERGs, are volunteer-based employee associations that are considered crucial for the success of all Diversity and Inclusion programs. They help increase employee morale, connect employees with one another and offer activities that enhance the employee experience from onboarding to retirement.

Not only do they increase the interaction between employees, but ERGs also serve as a communication channel from the workforce to leadership.

ERGs are usually formed around a primary dimension of identity, such as race, gender, disability, veteran status or sexual orientation.

Employees who do not have the same identity are encouraged to join ERGs to build their cultural awareness and to be allies for the group. We have a lot in common regardless of our identity; we all want to be respected and valued.

ERGs can also form around a common interest, such as environmental sustainability or early career employees.

ERGs can choose their level of activity and focus depending on member availability and area of interest. ERGs plan programs and events that amplify the ideas of diversity and inclusion and support employee onboarding and development.

Did you know the Department of Energy has six ERGs that all DOE employees can join? WAPA is following the DOE's example by piloting at least two ERGs this year. □

*Note: The author is an equal employment specialist.*

For more information, visit WAPA's ERG webpage at [myWAPA](#), Departments, Economic Impact and Diversity, Diversity and Inclusion, WAPA Employee Resource Groups or view the list of the DOE's ERGs at [energy.gov/diversity/employee-resource-groups](#)







# Stay safe at substations

By Paul Robbins

**W**APA operates 325 substations across its 15-state footprint. They play a vital role in WAPA's mission and are interesting places to visit. If you do visit them, be aware of the specific requirements, hazards and safety procedures involved.



Substations pose a variety of safety hazards that can be dangerous and even deadly. These include arc-flash hazards, minimum approach distances to live parts, lethal voltage, oil-filled equipment and tripping hazards.

Anyone entering a substation is required to view the Substation Orientation for Non-Technical Visitors video and read the associated brochure before they visit. The video and brochure provide background on substation procedures, protocols, hazards and safety.

The video and brochure can be accessed at **myWAPA, Departments, Safety and Occupational Health, Safety Training**



All substation visitors must wear basic personal protective equipment, including hard hats; jeans or long pants; and sturdy, closed-toe footwear. Natural fiber clothing instead of synthetics is highly recommended. If construction or maintenance activities are taking place at a substation, additional personal protective equipment, such as hearing or eye protection, may be required. Contact your regional Safety Office to learn more about special safety or equipment requirements.

A qualified person is permitted to enter, leave and move within the facility while performing or supervising work on high-voltage power systems without an escort.

The *Power System Safety Manual* defines a qualified person as, "One knowledgeable in the construction and operation of the electric power generation, transmission, and distribution equipment involved, along with the associated hazards."

If you are not a qualified person, you will need an escort while visiting a substation. A substation escort is an electrician, foreman, asset owner or somebody else qualified to move or work within an energized facility. Remember, if you are not qualified, you need an escort.

There may be instances during which an employee needs to become qualified; however, this is

not a one-size-fits-all process. For example, Vegetation Management, Information Technology and Security jobs all involve different hazards, so each category receives training that is customized and specific to those individual needs.

Both the PSSM and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration require a minimum level of training to be designated a qualified person. If you need to become qualified in a specific area, review the substation orientation materials and contact the asset owner for site-specific training and approval.

This training is conducted by a foreman or asset owner and is as-

sociated with the specific work being performed. Training must include knowledge of maximum voltage and minimum approach distances, recognition and proper use of personal protective equipment, necessary safe practices for specific work tasks and what is not safe to touch in the work area.

Substations are interesting places to visit and learn more about. Be aware and stay safe when you do. □

*Note: The author is a technical writer who works under the Cherokee Nation Strategic Programs contract.*

## Helpful tips when visiting substations

The *Substation Orientation for Non-Technical Visitors* brochure provides the following tips.

- Watch the *Substation Orientation for Non-Technical Visitors* video.
- Contact your escort ahead of time for any special instructions and a briefing on the substation.
- Always close gates when you enter or leave a facility. Check and secure all gate locks at facilities not equipped with electric gates.
- Upon arrival, go directly to the control building, contact the dispatcher and sign the logbook.
- The control building's interior light switch is the only switch that you are allowed to operate.
- Be aware of tripping hazards, including pipes, uneven surfaces, ditches, trenches and anchor bolts.
- Unless you are authorized, given special instructions or supervised by a qualified person, don't touch anything and stay at least 10 feet away from all electrical equipment.
- Don't open any cabinet or panel doors on site.
- Do not touch or displace tags, such as those marked with "Safety Tag – Do Not Operate" or other warnings. These tags are treated as locks and could prove fatal if displaced.
- Never enter a barricaded area.
- Assume that everything is energized and stay clear of all cables or wires.
- When carrying a long object, keep it below hip level and maintain safe distances from equipment.
- Do not drive inside a substation unless you have specific instruction to do so. If authorized, stay on designated routes and remove tall antennas from the vehicle.
- When leaving, sign out in the logbook, make note of the time, contact the dispatcher and lock the gate.



## Rapid Recaps

### Employees discuss FEVS results with leadership

On June 9, Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** hosted a virtual WAPA-wide town hall meeting with employees to discuss the results of the 2021 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey. The intention was to share details and data regarding the results and provide a platform for employees to share their own questions or concerns.

LeBeau discussed the results with the caveat that many external factors beyond WAPA's control affected the scores. For instance, the 2021 survey was conducted far later in the year than usual, an abbreviated version was used and results were only reported at the organizational level, rather than the more granular results of the past.

Even so, LeBeau made it clear that WAPA takes the results seriously and works to address concerns, however they are raised.

"Please know, I am listening," she said. "The senior team is listening. We want and need your input to respond in a meaningful way. If you can, take the time to participate; if you can't, share your thoughts with people who are participating. If you are participating, seek out others' opinions to help shape the variety and diversity of perspectives and needs."

Management and Program Analyst **Stacey Decker** provided a detailed overview of the results and Acting Chief of Staff **Jackie Brusoe** facilitated a wide-ranging employee Q&A session. Attendees were also encouraged to complete the 2022 FEVS.



### DSW receives replacement helicopter

On June 14, Helicopter Pilot **Logan Schuck** and Procurement Analyst **David Halla** travelled to Piney Flats, Tennessee, to pick up a new helicopter that will be available to assist crews in the Desert Southwest region, and elsewhere as required. This replaces the previous DSW helicopter, which was based in Phoenix, Arizona.

The new helicopter was signed for and then flown to Fort Collins, Colorado, where the vehicle will receive the upgrades and equipment necessary to provide aviation support to WAPA projects and initiatives.





## Brief Transmissions

### WAPA announces DSW regional manager

**O**n June 16, WAPA announced that **Jack Murray** had been selected to serve as senior vice president and Desert Southwest regional manager. He assumed the role June 19.

Murray worked for several years in the banking industry and in the U.S. Small Business Administration in Seattle, Washington, before joining WAPA in 1999 as a financial analyst in DSW. He developed his knowledge and skills as he moved up the ranks to rates manager and then vice president of Power Marketing. In 2018, he became vice president of transmission system asset management. He holds a Bachelor of Arts in business administration and finance from the University of Washington.

"Murray is a steadfast advocate for the craft, leadership development, inclusion and diversity, change management and human performance and just culture," said Administrator and CEO **Tracey LeBeau** in her announcements. "I would also like to sincerely thank **Scott Lund** for stepping up to lead as Desert Southwest's acting regional manager. His work enabled a smooth transition and his dedication to WAPA's mission is greatly appreciated."

### COVID-19 quarantine guidance available

**A**s new COVID-19 variants are identified and community transmission levels continue to fluctuate, it's easy to be confused about what to do in order to stay safe and keep your colleagues safe.

To make clear what is expected of employees when it comes to slowing the spread of the pandemic, and why, a "COVID Quarantine - breaking it down" document is now available on WAPA's COVID-19 intranet site.

This document provides information on incubation periods, when individuals are most contagious and more.



Read the document by visiting **myWAPA**, **COVID-19 tile** and clicking on **COVID Quarantine - breaking it down**



### Combined Financial Statements now available

**W**APA's Fiscal Year 2021 Combined Financial Statements document is now available.

The document includes the combined balance sheets as of Sept. 30, 2021, and 2020. It also includes an independent auditors' report, the related combined statements of revenues and expenses, changes in capitalization and cash flows and related notes



View the entire Fiscal Year 2021 Combined Financial Statements document by visiting [wapa.gov](http://wapa.gov), **The Source**, **Annual Reports**



### Standards of Conduct training due Sept. 2

**A**ll WAPA federal employees are required are required to complete the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission Standards of Conduct training in Learning Nucleus by Sept. 2. The training describes the three primary SOC rules established by FERC Order No. 717, including the No Conduit Rule prohibiting the communication of nonpublic transmission function information to marketing function employees. The training also provides overviews of permissible and not permissible communications between WAPA's transmission and marketing functions and the guidelines that should be followed for meetings between the two. Employees are required to take a quiz at the end of the training.

### Award deadline on the horizon

**A**ll fiscal year 2022 awards must be paid out prior to Sept. 30. Gold Star Awards must be redeemed by Sept. 9. Employees will then have until Sept. 30 to complete the process in Money Network or the awards will be cancelled.

Nominations received after the deadline will be held for processing until the FY 2023 awards budget is issued, typically in late November.

Contact [bsouth@wapa.gov](mailto:bsouth@wapa.gov) with any questions.

